

102 Paper #2: Sociological Interpretation—Gender, Race, Class, Culture

Due: Wed. 2/28/18 [Grace period: **if you attend the full class session on the due date** you may turn in the paper 24 hours later without penalty. I may grant additional extensions **only if you contact me before the due date**. Additional extensions may impact your grade.]

Length: medium (1,000 words *minimum*)

Format: Typed, double-spaced, **12-point font**. No cover page. Name, class & section #, ‘paper #1’, and **word count** in the upper-right or upper-left corner of the first page. Use page numbering. Use standard margins (1” on right, left, top & bottom).

Use of sources: use MLA documentation style for the literary work + any secondary sources

- *use parenthetical citations to indicate borrowed words, facts, ideas

- *provide a **works cited** listing including our textbook and the biography used

- *direct quotations¹ must be properly formatted and are limited to 15% of total

Audience: the whole class, including your teacher

Other Requirements: Include in a folder (w. pockets)...

- *typed, double-spaced paper (name, etc. in upper corner—no cover page)

- *writer’s memo (remind me of **your improvement goals from paper #1**)

- *xerox of all *outside* sources (not our textbook) in your works cited list

optional: USB flash drive for voice comments

Topic: The topic of this paper is to be any poem, play or story found in our textbook. You may select one of the works discussed in class or another work found in our text. See me for advice as needed.

Approach: Your approach to analyzing and interpreting the chosen work of literature will be to speculate about *how the meaning of the work changes* depending on the gender, social class, ethnicity, religion, politics, etc. of the reader. For example, a typical white male reader of the mid-Twentieth century would probably see “The Catbird Seat” as just another light and amusing story by Thurber, whereas a feminist reader of today might very well see it as a somewhat hysterical reaction by an author who is unconsciously threatened by women in a position of power—especially women who dare to enter into a “man’s world.”

Methods: Your task is to present your readers with variant interpretations of the same text based on the point of view of different real or hypothetical readers. That is to say, you will offer **two or more** viewpoints on the poem or story depending on whether the reader is male or female, black or white (or some other racial/ethnic type), middle or lower class, devout or atheist, etc. Show your readers how the meaning we make from a work of art can vary greatly due to one’s background and cultural assumptions.

Remember to assume that your reader will challenge, question, and resist every step of the way: explain, clarify, and provide detailed evidence in every paragraph.

I suggest that you review Chapter 49 of your book: “Critical Approaches to Literature.” The sections on “Sociological Criticism,” “Gender Criticism,” and “Cultural Studies” are relevant to this assignment.

¹ When quoting word-for-word, even for a part of a sentence, use either quotation marks or the indented block-quotation format (see your Reference Guide section 68e). Plagiarized papers will receive a failing grade.